# The Manchester Journal.

NUMBER 7. MANCHESTER, VERMONT, THURSDAY MORNING, JULY 9, 1874. VOLUME XIV



**The Manchester Journal.**

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY MORNING

BY D. K. SIMONDS,

EDITOR & PROPRIETOR.

Office 2 Doors south of the Court House,

MANCHESTER, VERMONT.

Terms $2. a year, $1.50 at offices where bundles are sent, if paid in advance.




### BETSEY BOBBETT.

My! but Mrs. Betsey Bobbett was a spry little widow. She walked as though she was moved by steel springs, especially if Squire Wilkins happened to be passing her house. If she saw him tilting by in his gig she was sure to be busy at the front window, picking an imaginary dead leaf off the rose geranium, or culling a spray of mignonette to fasten among her bonny brown curls. Sometimes she would be coming round the house from the cistern pump, and she would flirt her ruffles in a way to show the embroidered hems of her marvelously dainty skirts and the trimmest of all prettily-arched ankles.

She was as artful as a mink. Betsey was, and it was very certain that she had laid her plans to captivate the village Squire. Her brother thought so—he was an old bachelor who lived with her—and all the trouble Ira knew was the fear that Betsey would marry and his cozy relations be broken up. He embraced every opportunity to say something against every marriageable widow or susceptable bachelor in the neighborhood.

No, I don't like the looks of Squire Wilkins, no how, he said one evening as he leaned back in his chair at the tea table and picked his teeth leisurely. Them deep, up-and-down wrinkles between his eyebrows are enough for me; when you see them on anybody's face you may look out for ill-nature and a cross, fault-finding disposition. But where they run this way, and he arched his eyebrows up until his skinny-looking forehead lay all in deep furrows plowed horizontally why, then, you may expect a good-natured man, not fault-finding nor hard to please.

It's nothing to me who is ill-tempered or who has wrinkles, I'm sure, said Betsey, smiling demurely; but I never believed much in signs. You know our old Grandmother Tresway was as full of contrariness as the old fellow himself, and people looked in her smooth face, as placid as a china doll's, and they called her a saint and a mother in Israel, and all such holy, significant titles. You remember how she used to throw the teapot, or the press board, or the boot-jack, or anything that came in her way at us young ones.

And so the tale of the brother and sister drifted on until it ran into the past, and they both talked of old times and half forgotten adventures, and they spent a very pleasant evening together, as they usually did.

The next evening, just after dusk, the Squire called and stayed an hour or so. He had not intended to stop long—just ran in to see how Ira managed to keep his sweet potatoes all winter—he'd never had luck keeping his, somehow. Ira hurried and told him, secretly hoping that he'd go home immediately, but the Squire was in no hurry.

They talked election news and discussed the candidates for Governor, and for Lieutenant-Governor, and Congress, and yet the Squire lingered. He was building a new house, frame; story and a half, with two dormer windows, that cost fifty dollars each. He said dormer windows were so charming to sit in and watch the sunset in the summer evenings when the meller light fringed all the hills with glory; here he ran his spongy hands into his pockets and then plowed his fingers through his well-dyed ambrosial locks, and then fell into milking his sooty black beard, while he glanced over at the widow, whose eyes spake again.

Or, he continued, it is pleasant to sit in a dormer window in the full of the moon and watch him sailing amongst the clouds in all his evangelical majesty.—One knows how to vally a friend at such a time; and he rolled up his eyes and milked on leisurely while he sighed.

That's so, said Ira, thinking that he ought to say something to show himself an appreciative listener.

I've not planned yet how I'll have my upper rooms divided off, I want them handy and to be as large as possible, and he cast his round, white orbs up to the ceiling, thinking that he looked like a poet whose eyes were in a fine frenzy rolling.

This is fine October weather, said the widow, tossing her back curls and rocking gently to and fro, giving her head just motion enough to swing the glittering pendants in her ears and make them catch the light of the lamp and sparkle there most bewitchingly. Oh, it was a captivating little dodge, and it worked like a charm: The Squire's heart melted like a roll of July butter.

Her hands lay prettily in her lap; she continued; I always think of what the poet sung of October. He says:

There is vigor in the air
That brings such light to heart and eye
As came not with the summer glow,
Of days gone by.

She recited it rather mournfully, and raised her voice at the end of each line until she came to the last, and she gradually let it die away in a whisper.

That was artful dodge number two.

Ira was growing uneasy at the sentimental turn matters were taking, and, thinking of hospitality, he said: Squire, s'posen we have a basket of black walnuts to eat—some of them boosters that growed down on the bottom?

No, I believe not; I ate a hearty supper this evening, said the Squire. Now my family room is a trifle larger than this he continued, and he looked all around the room scrutinizingly.

The widow was glad she had swept down the cobwebs that very morning, and that Ira had whitewashed overhead the week before the state fair. To all outside appearances she was a tip-top housekeeper. But sometimes, if she was in a hurry, she did not make her bed more than three times in one week. Nobody knew it but Ira, and he didn't care one cent.

Ira stood his ground and managed to say something every time the Squire spoke; he was determined that he should not have an opportunity to talk sentiment to Betsey, for if he did dear knows where it would end. There was the Squire, a well-to-do widower, a good provider, only two children, rich, and looking about for a partner to share his joys and sorrows. There was his sister, Betsey Bobbett, only turned thirty-three, neat, handsome, smart as a cricket, and her husband as dead as a door nail this eighteen months and over, and why shouldn't she marry if she took a notion? But he couldn't live in the same house with the Squire and Betsey, even if they wanted him to. He thought, and thought and scratched his head over the problem, and his lower jaw fell, and for two days he pondered sorrowfully over this new dilemma.

One day Betsey was going over to her cousin's to a quilting, and Ira was to keep house and have the tea-kettle boiling at precisely five o'clock in the evening.

Now, nobody could guess what an ugly thing old Brother Ira did in her absense. Oh, the selfish old churl was driven to it! He knew it wasn't manly or kind, but how could he give up his cozy quarters and see Betsey's smiles lavished upon another?

Poor fellow he, arraigned himself, and while under indictment he said: Now, Ira Josephus Barnabee, you know very well that you are the viciousest mortal that ever lived, but something must be done. You don't want to be set adrift and be compelled to try the realities of a cruel world that always was hard on orphans and poor folks!

Ira often dealt with pathos on the fact of his being an orphan. He was not a very tender orphan, being in his forty-seventh year; but that was the way with some people, they will howl over the old time, by-gone sorrow all through their lives.

Ira knew that Madame Wilkins, deceased, had been a very pink of a housekeeper, and the bereft Squire thought this requirement the one thing needful in a wife. She must mop all the floors every Saturday, sweep down the cobwebs, polish the tinware, and do all the little things that his mother used to do. Of course her successor must be all that she had been.

After Betsey had been gone an hour or two Ira walked leisurely over to the new story-and-a-half frame house of Squire Wilkins, and seated himself on the work bench and commenced playing with the little curly shavings.

The Squire came in and began showing him around through the house very courteously. When they were up stairs, Ira said. You'd ought to have your rooms divided off like my sister Betsey has; I think hers are very convenient.

I wish I had the plan of rooms, said Squire, brightening up as though the idea tantalized him.

Get your rule and come right over along with me, there's nobody at home to-day, and we'll have full possession ourselves.

So the two men trugged off together to widow Betsey Bobbett's little rose-covered cottage in the edge of the village.

Now I don't wish to insinuate, but I verily believe that Ira Josephus, the selfish old bachelor brother, had been all through Rose Cottage, just trying how badly he could tumble together the contents, and what a suspicion he could cast upon that little housekeeper, Betsey Bobbett. In the pantry the doors of the cupboard stood staring wide open, showing a heterogeneous mess of cold boiled cabbage, pork, fish, turnips, pickles, butter, milk, and meat-frying, with nut-cakes, broken pies, dry bread, etc. The doors of the clothes-press stood ajar, and bonnets, hats, hoes, gaiters, gowns and slippers were thrown promiscuously together in tumbled heaps—dirty and clean, broken and whole, all just as though tumbled out of a rag-peddler's wagon in a hurricane. The sitting-room was in prime disorder; a basket of walnuts and a plate of apples, with peelings and cores among them, occupied a place in the middle of the floor. But her bedroom was the worst. The bed was not made; on one post hung a night-cap (it wasn't hers; Ira must have put it there); it was made of red flannel, without a hem or binding; the back part of it was puckered all up by a string run round it. On another post hung an old hoop-skirt that looked as if it had come out of Noah's ark after doing good service for Noah's wife and his sons' wives. Stockings lay scattered about, and shoes just as they had been kicked off, corsets, bustles, underclothing, and all the *et cætera* of a bed-room, in a dilapidated condition.—Ira acted very naturally, just as if everything was right and not unusual.

Now, Squire, this bed-room is a good size—about square, I should think, said the unimpressible Ira, taking the rule and beginning to measure from the right opposite the bed; take the measure and see for yourself; and he handed it to the bereft widower.

He took it and continued on with the same measurement that Ira had commenced. Of course it ran right under the bed. Now beds will get dirty under them. I don't know what's the reason, but the first sign of disorder in a bed-room begins with a fluffiness on the carpet under it. Then we women all know what a glorious receptacle under you bed it is for shoes, boxes, dirty clothes, cast-off duds, and anything one wants to put out of sight just for a little while. Good housekeepers, sometimes, so far depart from their integrity as to let things get in a muss in their bed-rooms. It is not for us to say whether Betsey Bobbett's bed-room was generally tidy or not.

Dreadful, wasn't it? that just while the immaculate Squire was down on all fours, away back under the bed, among feathers, and straw, and boxes, and bundles, and other things, a patting little trip was heard running up the stairs as light as a kitten's springy step, and who should come bounding into the room, curls a flying, and eyes sparkling, and cheeks aglow, but Betsey Bobbett herself!

Oh, good heavens! she screamed, as one glance of her eye took in the whole scene.

Ira was standing leaning over anxiously watching the Squire, who was under the bed, save that his legs were visible, or as much of them as wore boots.

What does this mean? I'd like to know, she said in a shrill voice, holding up both trembling hands as though aghast with horror.

The Squire came hustling out from among the debris, with his hair all pushed the wrong way, and the tails of his coat turned up over his back. He made a great clang and clatter and noise, and disarranged the hidden things generally; but he got out at at last and tried to look like a man who had been following a legitimate calling.

Now, I say no gentlemen will enter a lady's private room under such circumstances, said she, looking at the measuring rule; and especially in her absence! It's horrible! It's awful! and the poor little thing clapped her hands up to her face and sobbed hysterically.

He wanted to measure the rooms afore he planned his'n, said the brother, in a cringing voice, looking at his sister, and feeling awfully sorry that matters had taken such an unfavorable turn. His plan had worked well, but hadn't stopped there; it had gone on working; and he couldn't see, as he stood there scratching his head, where the mischief would end.

I regret exceedingly, Mrs. Bobbett, that I have subject myself to your displeasure, said the discomforted Squire, twisting his fingers together and looking very miserable and red-faced.

Well, don't stand here then! Go home where you belong; and you needn't be a bit surprised, sir, if I have you up before the session at their next meeting, said the incensed widow, her eyes flashing fire. Both of the men were so scared that they stood as if petrified.

Where in the world did this old thing come from, I'd like to know? she shrieked out, seizing hold of the funny flannel night-cap that was perched upon the top of the foot post, and she gave it a vicious jerk, breaking the string that held in the pucker at the back part of it, and it slipped down over the post. Enraged, she pulled at it violently, tore it off, and twisting it up in a little wad threw it at the Squire's head. Clear out, I say, both of you prowling dogs; and she stamped her little foot very much in earnest and followed them to the head of the stairs.

Mrs. Bobbett, my dear woman, began the Squire, apologetically.

Away with you; don't you go to Mrs. Bobbeting me, said she, and she made the dearest little fist, which she extended in the direction of his face. He dodged his head, as if a wasp was coming that way, and the two men shambled off down stairs. She lay prone on the floor in her dire distress and cried 'rivers of tears,' tears of sorrow, and mortification, and anger, and spite, and grief, and dissappointment. But time brought an end to her agony—she grew calm and her sorrow was of the subdued kind. While she lay on the floor sobbing, her brother Ira was on the floor too, down in the sitting room and he was giving expression to the exaltation that lifted him higher than he'd ever been before.

No danger now, he thought, of the poor orphan, Ira Josephus, being turned out of house and home, to make room for Squire Wilkins. Sold! sold! he ejaculated, as he lay on his broad back and kicked his heels up in the air and gesticulated with his brawny fists. Oh, that was rich! but my! didn't her eyes blaze, and her cheeks glow! she looked like a harnsome fury, and in his inexpressible exuberance of joy he beat his breast and shook his head and acted like a crazy man.

We don't know how the brother and sister settled the affair and became good friends again, but we know it to be the case, and that they lived together as snug as two chatty little mice, and she smiles again, and swings her bonny curls bewitchingly and is as happy as the days are long.

Squire Wilson married that red-headed widow, with the lame boy, who used to live on the farm he sold after he came to the village. She and widow Bobbett are friends, and they gossip and sip tea together in the summer evenings, and see a great deal of comfort. We don't know whether the Squire planned his rooms after those in Rose Cottage, or not, but we guess by the twinkle in his gray eyes that he often laughs over the ridiculous figure he cut, crawling around under the bed of the widow, Betsey Bobbett.

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An American artist tells this story of a fellow-countryman who interviewed him in one of the Italian galleries:

American! oh, I am so glad. Let me ask you some questions. I have been buying pictures. Can you tell me whether or not I have been cheated? They are about so large—holding his hands in various positions to indicate the different sizes, and cost so much—naming the price of each. Do you think I paid too much?

The artist, being unwilling to disturb his equanimity, replied that it depended a good deal on circumstances, but he thought it most likely he had not paid more than was right.

One more question, Mister, he exclaimed, anxiously, as the artist was about to resume his work.

Certainly, sir.

Do you think (leaning over him, and speaking in a lower tone), do you really think, Mister, that these Eye-talians put good materials into their pictures?

### THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

(From the Danbury News Man.)

A few days ago I made application to a member of the House of Commons for permission to witness a session.

I received a prompt answer requesting me to be in waiting in St Stephen's lobby at 5 o'clock that afternoon where the writer would meet me and "put me through". He didn't use that phrase exactly, but that was the substance of his note. Knowing it would not do to trifle with the time of a member of so illustrious a body, I was on hand promptly to the hour, in the central hall—so called—where two policemen guarded the hallway to the House. I explained my errand to one of the officers, and was told I would have to wait there until the member came out, as the House was already in session.

I found others in waiting, and new faces constantly arriving. Some effected an immediate entrance, others were interviewed briefly by members with whom they had made engagements, and the rest wandered around, as I did and, felt of the mouldings.

Sir Charles Dilke, the member to whose courtesy I am indebted for the view of the House in session, would be, when he got around, the first Knight I had seen. I am not much used to noblemen, my knowledge of them being obtained entirely through prints.

With the imagination thus left to itself and being blessed with an imagination that never knew a day's sickness, I very naturally constructed a nobleman worth seeing.

Common sense teaches us all that a member of the nobility is but a lump of human clay fashioned on models common to our seeing; but, unconsciously ignoring the teachings aforesaid, we find our mind imbued with a being who shows traces of nobility in his very step and bearing, whom no density of human crowd could hide from our vision.

Am I exaggerating this mental weakness? Let us see. Can you conceive of a bow-legged duke? Or is it possible for you to locate a pimple on the nose of a viscount? And no one, however diseased his imagination, ever pictured a baron with an ulcerated leg, or conceived of such a monstrous impossibility as a cross-eyed dutchess.

No, my dear reader, the imperfections of the masses have never been associated with the nobility, and however radically practical are the teachings of common sense, the ignorant fervor of the imagination has made the deepest impression.

And so I was very soon to see a Knight. I had seen a Baron and a French Count; we have them at our table. Before knowing who they were I had determined that the former was the proprietor of a hardware store, and the latter a superannuated clerk in the post office.

When I learned their true position in this world I was very much shocked, or, as our people so exquisitely express it regularly kerflummoxed.

I was pencilling my name and address with other information on the calf of George the third's leg, when one of the policemen shouted the name of Sir Charles Dilke. Now, thought I, he will come when he hears that. The policeman shouted again. I looked at him very attentively, wondering where he thought Sir Charles was—on the roof or in the crypt. Again he screamed. Then his eyes suddenly lighted on me, and an immediate change came upon his face.

O, there you are, are you? he enquired with some disgust, Why didn't you answer when I shouted.

My name ain't Dilke, I indignantly protested. My name is—

But was cut short by a well built gentleman of apparently 35 years with a pleasant expression of countenance, who advanced, and made himself known, and asked me to follow him.

And I followed him by the policeman, and along the hall. This was Sir Charles a *bona fide* Knight, and I examined his appearance with engrossing interest.

He was a well built man, as I have said, but ordinary appearing. He might have been a rural lawyer or school teacher. But he was a Knight, and all the while he was going ahead and all the while I was following after I tried to clothe him with a lance and shield and helmet, and fell back from the task exhausted.

From the hall we went into an extensive lobby filled with men whom I subsequently learned to be members of the House, and people "seeing" them; with several exceptions they were in animated discussions upon dreary topics of legislation.

Sir Charles left me here, but returned in a moment with a slip of paper in his hand, which he gave to a watchman at the foot of a stair-way, and bidding me good bye he went into the House, and I climbed up the stairs and came out into the galleries of the House, and took my first look at the House of Commons in session.

It was not, to first appearance, a large apartment. There were galleries at the side, and one at each end. That over the speaker's chair was devoted to shaggy-headed and baldheaded men called reporters. The opposite end gallery was devoted to the quiet and patient sight-seers.

The first glance showed me that the entire place was of polished oak, which gave it a sombre appearance. Then I looked down upon the Commoners. They sat in pew seats arraged like gallery seats in tiers one above the other, from the middle aisle to the wall on each side. In a heavy oaken box with gorgeous roof at the upper end of the aisle sat the speaker in a fainting condition, apparently, from the enormous wig of wool on his head. In front of him in the aisle sat three men in gowns and wigs. In front, to the right of him, sat the conservatives tiered up there in gloomy array. Opposite them were the fiery radicals similarly tiered. Each man when occasion requires, can rest himself by bracing his knees against the back of the seat in front—all but the occupants of the front or lowest seats who have nothing in front of them.

The atmosphere below us was smoky, and through the hazy canopy appeared the statesmen of educated and aristocratic England with uncovered heads and crossed legs.

The smoke, the lounging and careless attitudes of members, wearing their hats and carrying, in a great many instances, their hands in their pockets, reminded me so forcebly of a Western hotel bar-room that for an instant I was benumbed and could merely stare down upon the astounding spectacle without the faintest attempt to understand it.

A conservative was speaking upon a bill for regulating registration of deaths. He had a poor voice, a faulty pronunciation, and spoke so low that only an occasional word could be understood in the gallery. I watched the reporters, equally distant from him, and having no earthly interest in the subject, and wondered what sort of a report they would make of his speech. But they scribbled on as uninterruptedly as though they heard what he was saying.

The Speaker continued to sink down into the capacious folds of his chair, until he threatened to disappear entirely.—Some of the members shoved their hands to the full depth of their trousers' pockets and with hat brims drawn down over their eyes fell to thinking upon the condition of the country. Others simply crossed their legs and picked their teeth meditatively.

Only one man listened. He was a radical and occupied the front seat. His attention was explained when the conservative occupying the floor sat down. Then he commenced, talking rapidly, and reading harrowing statistics.

Several times during his occupancy of the floor some one among the radicals distinctly said, hear, hear.

There were other speakers. The light grew dimmer. Aren't they going to light the gas, asked my companion. I said nothing. I always do say nothing on such occasions. I think it looks profound.

Now there was a radical talking. He was a slim man, with hair frosted with age, and a very nervous face, and quick voice. The moment he rose, various groanings, like shouts from a deep sewer or the rumbling of a heavy vehicle over a distant bridge, ascended from the conservatives. It was a protest against his taking the time. A sort of stoical, wooden opposition, as if the makers of it were doing it by the day. Not the least change of position, not the least show of animation was visible where this rumbling ascended. The radicals as stoically preserved their lounging, as if the success or failure of their fellow was of no moment to them, and both acted as if the entire debate was a dreary farce of which they long ago had tired.

When I first looked at the pews and saw that the representatives of a great nation had no desks to put their feet upon and spit under, I was sorry for them. But I am not now.

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Josh Billings says he always liked hash, and one of our townsmen seems inclined to take to take hash. He was at Troy in company with other Hoosick men, and called for dinner at a certain hotel, and among other nice and palatable dishes was brought on the table the veritable hash. Our friend was very hungry, and waded into every dish within reach, and went for hash with ravenous delight—said it was the nicest dish he had ever tasted, and became so enthusiastic over its good qualities that he declared if the cook that made that hash was a single lady he should marry her sure. This was heard by the cook, who stuck her head into the dining-room door and said, You gemman what likes dat hash, is you in earnest? Our friend hasn't been seen or heard from since, and Dinah is as mad as a wet hen, kase she's gone and been fooled by dat ar Hoosicky chap.—[Hoosick Falls Standard.]

### THE SIMPLE SECRET.

Twenty clerks in a store, twenty hands in a printing office, twenty apprentices in ship-yards, twenty young men in a village—all want to get on in the world, and expect to do so. One of the clerks will become a partner, and make a fortune; one of the compositors will own a newspaper and become an influential citizen; one of the apprentices will become a master builder; one of the young villagers will get a handsome farm, and live like a patriarch—but which one is the lucky individual? Luck!

There is no luck about it. The thing is almost as certain as the rule of three. The young fellow who distances his competitors is he who masters his business, who preserves his integrity, who lives cleanly and purely, who devotes his leisure time to the acquisition of knowledge, who saves spare money. There are some ways to fortune shorter than the old dusty highway; but the staunch men of the community, the men who achieve something really worth having, good fortune, good name, and serene old age, all go in this road.

### A SPORT.

The following dialogue, that took place in a Boston street car recently, is too good to be lost:

One of a couple of German gentlemen sitting in one end of the car seeing a flashily dressed fellow come and take his seat at an opposite end from where they were sitting, asked:

Who ish dat, Hans?

Oh, dat ish a sport.

Vot you call a sport, hey?

Don't you know?

No, vot ish he?

Vel, he ish one of der fellers vot shaves all de hair off a pig, and cover him all over mit soap, and pet a green man $5 he can't catch him.